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Maine's Senators Tell Why They Split On McCone's Confirmation

It has not escaped the notice of Maine people that on the contentious question of confirmation of John A. McCone to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the state's two U. S. Senators have split. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith voted in the negative, with 11 other members of the chamber; Sen. Edmund S. Muskie voted to confirm.

Sen. Muskie told our May Craig that "this is a difficult vote," and we expect the lady from Maine would concur. John McCone is a Republican of great ability, vigorous, articulate, and far-seeing. Since he reportedly told Mrs. Smith that he had some doubt as to his ability to head up the CIA, perhaps we should say he demonstrates humility, too, an attribute not hitherto associated with him. In Mrs. Smith's statement, she gave this admission equal weight with his demonstrable lack of experience in the intelligence field.

The junior Senator himself expressed reservations, but mainly they extend beyond the unknown factor of Mr. McCone's abilities to the status of CIA itself and its

relations with Congress. Senator Muskie, it is clear, remembers the policy-making and military role CIA played in the disastrous Cuban episode. It was guilty of grave errors of omission and commission, and we gather that he voted to confirm mainly because of his confidence in President Kennedy. Aware of the sensitive nature of CIA and fully cognizant of the criticism that would result from a poor appointment, the Chief Executive, Sen. Muskie is certain, has done his best to select the man he believes is the best possible choice.

It is significant that neither Senator mentioned the conflict of interest of which McCone is allegedly guilty—an issue raised by Drew Pearson in a number of recent articles. Chiefly they illustrate the jeopardy faced by every appointee to difficult government jobs, and Pearson's "exposure" illustrates, too, the complaint of Presidents that top jobs are often hard to fill with highly qualified people. At any rate, McCone is "in", and how he performs is important to the security of us all.